



Buffs Plead For 'Creeper'

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By JAN PADFIELD

Deseret News Staff Writer

HEBER CITY — One of Utah's potentially great recreational and tourist attractions may be lost in less than two weeks.

"If we let this go, we'll have bitter regrets in a few years, but it will have passed from the scene forever," Lowe Ashton, local businessman and past president of the Wasatch County Chamber of Commerce, said at a meeting Tuesday night in Wasatch County Courthouse.

He spoke of the old Denver and Rio Grande Railroad right-of-way through Wasatch County and down Provo Canyon, pathway of the old "Heber Creeper."

Wasatch County Chapter of Commerce and Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation propose reviving the colorful and dramatic era of the steam locomotive on a segment of D & RGW trackage through scenery which justifies local claim of "paradise of the Rockies."

The railroad museum buffs (affiliated with National Railway Historical Society) have six rare antique engines in

fine working order with unlimited maintenance parts and equipment, plus cars and even an old wooden caboose. The tracks and roadbed have been pronounced in good condition with two miles of 75 pound rails and about 10 miles of 90 pound rails.

But State Department of Highways purchased the rails and right-of-way last spring

and may consider the area for super highway construction. However, they have opened bids for removal of the tracks and will let the bids Sept. 21.

"We're not asking anyone for anything except time. The Road Commission told us they have no plan of highway construction for the Wildwood to Heber section until at least 1974. We just want them to

delay junking it and allow its use for the next two or three years," Leon Ritchie, chamber president, said.

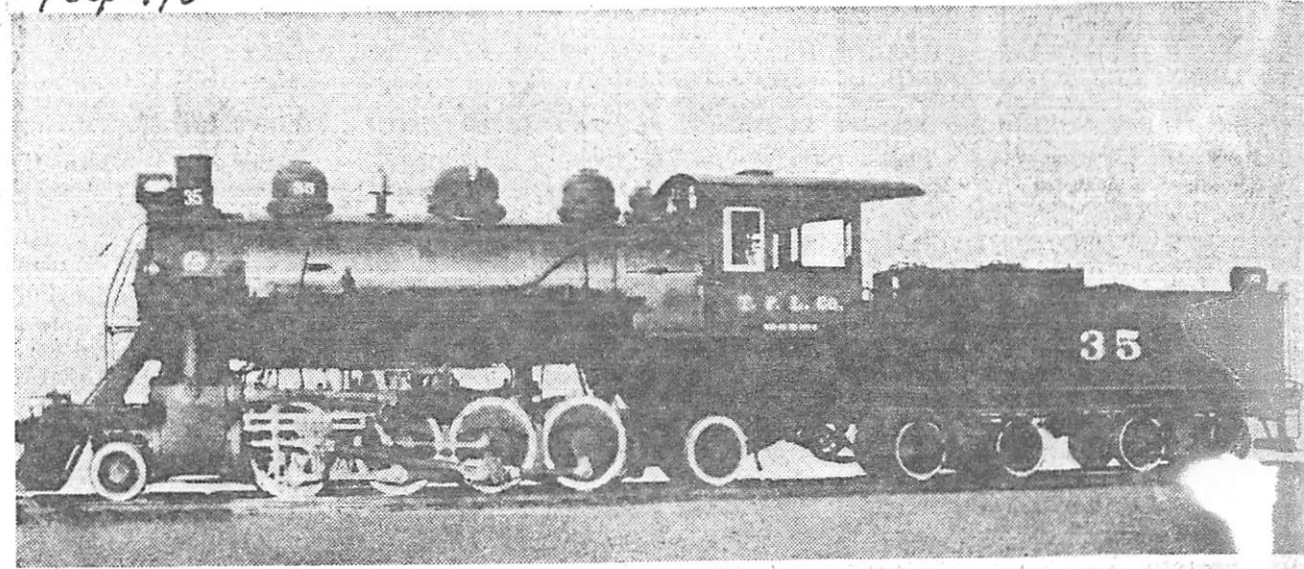
"We can prove the economic feasibility of this project," Elmo Jacobsen, chairman of Wasatch County Commission, said.

There are 102 lines operating antique locomotives as recreational and tourist

attractions all over the country and they do a tremendous business, it was reported. Closest competition would be the Yosemite and Shasta Routes in California and the Durango-Silverton, Colo. project, according to J. R. Edwards, Charles H. Nielsen, both Salt Lake City, and F. M. McLaughlin, Ogden, of the R.R. Co.

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Rail Buffs Plead For 'Creeper'

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cers of the Wasatch Railway
Museum and Foundation.

Tuesday, a small gasoline engine was pressed into service for a trial run. Leaving the old terminal, the little train clickety-clacked through the lush valley basking in early autumn sunlight. Farmers waved a friendly salute, pausing from cutting the last alfalfa or plowing the brown furrows.

RACE TRAIN

A white mare and brown colt raced the rail intruder along a meadow, edged in waving goldenrod. The valley stretched serenely in afternoon haze from Midway—"Little Switzerland," resting in her Alp-like setting—to Charleston, near the green waters of Deer Creek Reservoir.

A newly painted red barn contrasted sharply with the artist's delight . . . a weathered, dilapidated gray one. Black and white cows plodded the long lane at milking time while others crossed a meandering stream that later became a slough surrounded by brown cat-tails thrusting white bundles of parachutes into the breeze. At Stringtown a cross-pole fence indicates the boundary of Wasatch Mountain State Park.

MANY PLANS

"I visualize here an engine and cars with Swiss motif and European design, taking off on a spur line leading to the planned Swiss Village up past Midway," someone offered.

"A marina is planned in the reservoir's natural harbor at Decker Canyon with swimming areas along the sandy beaches" said Russell Wall, county commissioner, as a large blue heron rose from the shoreline.

"I can see a masked bandit raid staged by horses and riders coming from that rocky pinnacle . . . in the best Butch Cassidy style."



Rail buffs and Wasatch County officials take test ride over scenic rail route from Heber City through Provo Canyon.

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By Irene Jones

Tribune Staff Writer

HEBER CITY — Since the famed "Heber Creeper" died earlier this year, rusting railroad tracks winding up through Provo Canyon await their probable destruction.

Coming to the rescue, maybe, will be the Wasatch Mountain Railway, a steam tourist railroad planned by the Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation, Inc., Salt Lake City.

The right-of-way owned by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad has been purchased by the Utah State Road Commission.

Edwin E. Lovelace, State Highway Department District 6 engineer, has announced that construction of the first phase of a proposed expressway through Provo Canyon has been delayed, at least until next spring.

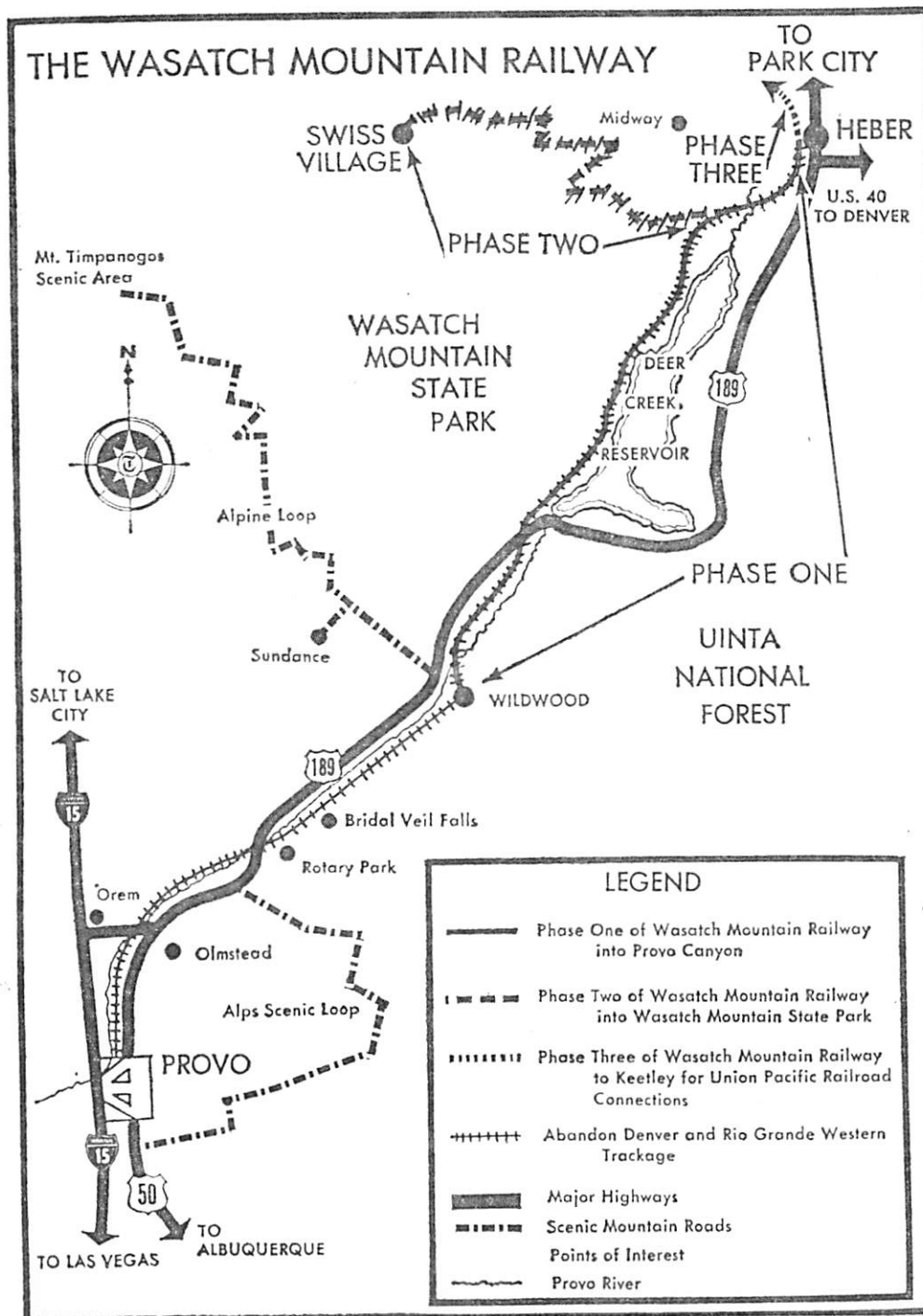
Too Late This Year

Plans are completed for the project from the mouth of the canyon to Nuns, about 4½ miles up the canyon, including construction of three bridges, one at the mouth of the canyon, at Canyon Glen and at Nuns.

Cost would be about \$5 million, he said, and it is too late in the season to start such a project Mr. Lovelace said.

U.S. 189, which now runs through the canyon, will remain as a frontage road, giving access to area recreational facilities.

The proposed highway, scheduled to be constructed at least partially along the railroad right-of-way, would have access roads at the mouth of Provo Canyon, Rotary Park located a half mile below Bridal Veil Falls. Vision Park



Historic Foundation Proposal

Bids were opened on a project to remove the tracks, which run from the mouth of Provo Canyon to Heber City.

However, the commission last week heard a Wasatch Chamber of Commerce member ask to save the trackage north of Wildwood, located 13 miles up the canyon.

Bids Held

The bids have been held for two weeks while the Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation, Inc., and the Wasatch Chamber of Commerce prepared a feasibility report for the commission concerning the advantages of the steam tourist railway.

A survey by the foundation shows a steam tourist railroad through Provo Canyon would increase tourism in Central Utah.

Looking to the future, Jay R. Edwards, foundation president, said the state is promoting what may well become the largest outdoor recreation attraction in the Intermountain area, the Wasatch Mountain State Park, northwest of Deer Creek Reservoir.

This park, expected to be completed within eight years, will contain a multi-million-dollar winter ski and summer resort complex, he said.

The Utah State Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of National Resources, he said, has expressed interest over the possibility of constructing a scenic railroad from the present Heber branch line to the ski resort complex planned for the park.

The stream tourist railroad, which could be used year-round, would aid parking problems in the resort area and create a summer activity, he added.

Four Engines

The Museum Foundation now owns four steam locomotives, each rare and exceptional exhibit material, said Mr. Edwards.

Other equipment already acquired includes four passenger cars, a caboose, tools and essential spare parts and artifacts from railroad history, available for museum display.

Planned in the venture are three railroad stations, at Heber City, Wildwood and the proposed Swiss Village, in the Wasatch Mountain State Park.

Mr. Edwards said that once the railway would be in operation, an "Old West town" could be developed on the land area west of Heber City. Restaurants, opera houses, antique and souvenir shops and motels, along with other recreation and entertainment facilities would be available.

Phase Two

The foundation expects to build the railway in three phases, beginning with the railway between Heber City and Wildwood. Headquarters

